



Albany: Sheriff's Heroin Addiction Recovery Program

Practitioner:

[Albany County Sheriff's Office](#)

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Program Started:

October 2015

Published:

February 2021

Summary:

Albany County Sheriff's Office provides jail-based drug treatment services in collaboration with community-based treatment centers and discharge planning to support post-release treatment.

Problem

In recent years, the widespread misuse of prescription and non-prescription opioids, including heroin, has become a public health crisis. Increasingly, many persons addicted to opioids come into contact with the adult correctional system. The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that more than half of the individuals incarcerated have either abused or are addicted to drugs, but few receive treatment while incarcerated.

Program Description

In October 2015, the Albany County Sheriff's Office started the Sheriff's Heroin Addiction Recovery Program (SHARP), a pre- and post-release treatment program for men detained at the Albany County Correctional Facility. The program includes both correctional-based treatment and post-release treatment components through collaboration with community-based treatment centers. Although the program initially targeted the opioid epidemic, the Albany County Sheriff's Office later expanded the program to include any substance abuse disorder. A program for females began in 2017.

Participation in SHARP is voluntary, and individuals can opt out at any point. Individuals self-report a substance abuse disorder during intake or at any point during confinement which prompts a follow-up interview for more information with a

Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor (CASAC). The counselor develops a treatment plan with the participant to address their specific needs, which can range from medically assisted treatment to group therapy.

The program has a dedicated housing unit and uses a multifaceted approach to treatment, including counseling, peer-to-peer support, medication as needed, the development of a post-release treatment strategy and continued treatment with community-based providers. CASACs from the Albany County Correctional Facility or the Addictions Care Center of Albany, a local nonprofit organization, provide individual counseling. As of December 2020, three Albany County Correctional Facility employees and one Addictions Care Center of Albany employee staff the program.

The post-release treatment strategy includes discharge planning and aftercare services, including scheduling individuals about to be discharged for post-release appointments in the community, and identifying strategies to help prevent individuals with addictions from relapsing. Upon release, the Albany County Sheriff's Office provides transportation from the Albany County Correctional Facility directly to the participant's community treatment center appointment. If program participants sign a release of information

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form, the CASACs can continue to follow their progress for up to a year.

The women's program provides a separate housing unit and programming. In addition to the features of the men's program, the women's program includes a recovery group that addresses trauma.

While there are no explicit exclusion criteria, prospective participants with serious felony charges are considered on a case-by-case basis. Participants also can be removed from the specialized housing units designated for the program if their behavior is problematic.

Funding

The Albany County Sheriff's Office administers SHARP primarily within existing resources. The New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports funds CASAC with the Addictions Care Center of Albany.

Program Reviews or Evaluations

The Albany County Sheriff's Office has tracked program participants from enrollment until release from the facility since 2015. During the four-year period from 2015 through 2019, SHARP admitted 632 men and released 176 men to treatment. Since 2017, 82 women participated in the program and 60 women were released to treatment. Not all formerly incarcerated individuals participate in post-release treatment, but those who did signed a release form and engaged in follow-up services. As of December 31, 2019, 38 men and eight women who participated in SHARP returned to Albany County Correctional Facility for a new charge; a recidivism rate of 6 percent for men and 10 percent for women.

- In 2016, 42 men were released to treatment from SHARP with 29 percent (12) returning to the Albany County Correctional Facility on a new charge during 2016 or 2017.
- In 2017, 50 men were released to treatment from SHARP with 14 percent (7) returning to the Albany County Correctional Facility on a new charge during 2017 or 2018.
- In 2018, 44 men were released to treatment from SHARP with 9 percent (4) returning to the Albany County Correctional Facility on a new charge during 2018 or 2019.

Supportive Research

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse's [Principles of Drug Abuse Treatment for Criminal Justice Populations – A Research-Based Guide](#), the most

effective treatment models integrate criminal justice and drug treatment systems and services to provide treatment planning and continuing care after release. Albany County Sheriff's Office incorporated these elements into SHARP.

Critical Success Factors

- It was important to develop the program with expertise from others. The Albany County Sheriff's Office worked with another sheriff's office that had success with a similar program, and developed its policy and procedures with the help of the [Addictions Care Center of Albany](#) and the group [Soldier On](#).
- Given that a key component of SHARP is separate housing for participants, it was critical to ensure that the housing unit provided adequate and appropriate space for group and individual counseling. Albany County Correctional Facility renovated an older housing unit for this program, and eventually expanded it to other units as the program grew and required additional space.

Lessons Learned

Management conducted additional staff training after recognizing that many of the correctional staff initially resisted the implementation of this type of program. As time passed, there has been increased correctional staff support for the program.

Additional Comments

- The Albany County Sheriff's Office welcomes other agencies interested in implementing a similar program to visit for an in-person look at SHARP.
- In March 2020, the Albany County Correctional Facility halted most programming within the facility due to COVID-19. The SHARP housing unit was repurposed as quarantine space and SHARP participants were moved to other units. Detained individuals still receive services through SHARP, and CASACs develop treatment plans. Medication continues to be administered as needed. Although no peer-to-peer support meetings are currently taking place, CASACs still provide individual counseling utilizing the facility's non-contact, glass-partitioned visiting room. CASACs still provide a post-release treatment strategy, however, transportation services upon release have been suspended due to COVID-19.

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